

**THE "ELECT INFANT" QUESTION.**

The General Assembly has asked the Presbyteries in our Church whether they desire any change in our Confession of Faith, on the subject of the salvation of incapables.

The teaching of the Confession as it stands is that adults are saved by the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, and through Christ's atoning blood. And that this salvation becomes effective when they take that step of turning from sin unto God, which is sometimes called repentance and sometimes is called faith. For repentance and faith are the same act; repentance is turning from sin, and faith is turning to God. The salvation of an adult is God's work, applied to the sinner when he takes this step.

As regards incapables,—the idiot, the child who dies in infancy—our Confession teaches that they also are saved by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and through Christ's atoning blood. But inasmuch as these are taken from earth before they have the capacity of repentance and faith, our Confession leaves unsaid anything concerning the time of their exercise of faith.

In so doing it does not speak vaguely. For it teaches emphatically that the souls of the redeemed are "at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory"; and this is equally true of infants as of adults.

The teaching of the Confession does therefore point out with clearness the manner of the salvation of those who die in infancy.

Now comes a question from some: Does the Confession assert positively and unequivocally that all these incapables are included in the list of the elect? There are those who desire that this assertion shall appear in our Confession of Faith. They have agitated for it, year after year. The Assembly has given its decision, over and over, that our people believe this to be the fact—that all who die in tender years are included in the redeemed—but it has declined to propose any amendment to our Confession.

There is good ground for our belief in this matter, not in any direct statement in the Bible, but by inference from Bible language. We are right in indulging this hope and expectation.

But in framing a Confession of Faith we are limited to those truths which can be absolutely proved from the Bible. We put into it those truths which are categorically stated in God's word, and those which come to us by necessary inference from it. Notice the word "necessary." Not all our inferences may be written in our Confession; as for instance our post-millennial inferences. We believe them; but they are not "necessary" inferences, and they ought not to be made a part of our Confession.

In like manner our belief that all incapables are included in the number of the elect, is an inference in which almost every Protestant now concurs. But it is not a "necessary" inference from any passage of Scripture, and is not a proper matter for insertion in our Standards.

But further, the question what persons are included among the elect is one which Christ refused to discuss while on earth. To the question, "Lord, are there few

that be saved?" He replied, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." He did not encourage such a question.

The reason is obvious. Election is a prerogative of the sovereignty of God. God chooses according to the counsel of his own will. He does not want any man or any men to tell him whom he has elected or whom he shall elect. Therefore it does not belong to the Presbyterian Church nor to any man whatever to declare what individuals are within the number of the elect.

To us, therefore, it would appear that the language of our Confession is very wise. Elect adults are saved when they exercise repentance and faith. Elect infants (and the expression implies our hope that all who die in infancy are elect) are saved by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, exercised either in life, or when (in the article of death) they are "made perfect in holiness."

Let it be noted that in our Standards, as they now read, there is not one line to suggest that any one of these incapables fails of heaven. Romanism excludes them. Arminianism makes no provision for redeeming them from the power of sin or the penalty of sin. Presbyterianism is the only creed which tells us how an infant, being a sinner, can be saved and is saved, and made an heir of God.

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**THE FEAT OF THE WIRELESS.**

The world stands amazed and delighted at the last demonstration of the power and usefulness of wireless telegraphy. The "Republic" was struck by the "Florida," out upon the high sea. The flood of waters at once poured in. The great ship and all upon it were placed in deadly peril. In a similar disaster, many years ago, a French steamship and all on board of her went down. But the Marconi wireless telegraph was on the ship. Many have doubted its practical usefulness. It has been esteemed by them as a pleasant plaything. The manager of the apparatus sprang to it and began with the utmost vigor to send up into the air unseen, but none the less earnest, cries of distress and appeals for help. He knew not where they might be caught up by others out on the seas, but with faith in his system he told to the air and the clouds the name of his ship, her situation in the seas, and cried, "In distress and sinking!" The appeal was not in vain. Two great vessels out on the ocean, one of them a hundred and twenty miles away, and two cutters in the nearest port caught the silent cry and instantly turned their prows towards the sinking ship, signalling forward, as they ploughed their way through the waters of the great deep, words of encouragement and cheer, "We are coming." Back and forth went the invisible, unwritten, unspoken messages, telling of the distress and of the coming relief. In a few hours the helping ships hove in sight, and the vessel in distress and all upon her were saved.

God has provided a way by which the soul in distress may send out its signals to him. Men try to say that it is folly. They tell us that it is against reason. They say that prayer is but beating the air. The Christian who has tried it knows better. The faith which is the evidence of things not seen sends up to God through